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Resolution

**REGIONAL COMMITTEE FOR THE
EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN**

**EM/RC68/R.1
October 2021**

**Sixty-eighth session
Agenda item 2**

Annual report of the Regional Director for 2020

The Regional Committee,

Having reviewed the annual report of the Regional Director on the work of WHO in the Eastern Mediterranean Region for 2020¹ and the progress reports requested by the Regional Committee;²

Having reviewed the document “*Vision 2023: health for all by all in the Eastern Mediterranean Region: Midterm Push Forward Plan – an overview*”, which presents key findings, recommendations and plans of the *Vision 2023* Midterm Review and Push Forward;

Acknowledging that significant acceleration is required for the Region to meet its commitments under *Vision 2023*, WHO’s Thirteenth General Programme of Work (GPW 13) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs);

Recognizing not only the huge burden caused by the pandemic in the Region, including both mortality and morbidity caused by COVID-19 and the disruption of health services, economies and societies, but also the many gaps that the pandemic uncovered in the Region’s systems to be more prepared and better respond to health emergencies overall;

Noting encouraging recent progress in polio eradication;

Noting that the COVID-19 pandemic has provided an opportunity to build more resilient health systems, strengthen community engagement, advance universal health coverage including ensuring delivery of essential health services, share lessons and build solidarity within and between countries, and use innovative approaches to advance the *Vision 2023* technical agenda and public health in the Region, but also;

Noting with concern the finding of the midterm review report on progress in implementing the regional strategy on tobacco control³ that the Region is struggling to achieve the global target of a 30% reduction in tobacco use and other commitments on tobacco control under the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC), SDGs, GPW 13 and the NCD voluntary global targets;

¹ EM/RC68/3.

² EM/RC68/INF.DOC.1–12.

³ EM/RC68/INF.DOC.2.

1. **THANKS** the Regional Director for his comprehensive report on the work of WHO in the Region, noting in particular the Organization's support in the COVID-19 pandemic response;
2. **ADOPTS** the annual report of the Regional Director for 2020;
3. **THANKS** the Regional Director for conducting the *Vision 2023* Midterm Review and Push Forward;
4. **WELCOMES** the recommendations of the Midterm Review to accelerate implementation of *Vision 2023*;
5. **ADOPTS** the Midterm Push Forward Plan including the strategic accelerators, and short-term and longer term actions;
6. **ENDORSES** the establishment of a High-level Ministerial Group on the Control of Tobacco and Emerging Tobacco and Nicotine Products in the Eastern Mediterranean Region (details of which are annexed to this resolution);
7. **URGES** Member States to:
 - 7.1 Implement all required programmes and initiatives effectively to meet their commitments under the *Vision 2023* Midterm Review and Push Forward recommendations;
 - 7.2 Expand universal health coverage focusing on primary health care and using an integrated, people-centred approach to enhance country-level impact;
 - 7.3 Expand efforts to advocate for a whole-of-government and whole-of society approach to address the social determinants of health, promote healthier populations and build solidarity for health for all by all;
 - 7.4 Maintain the Region's commitment to eradicating polio; and
 - 7.5 Support and follow the recommendations of the High-level Ministerial Group on the Control of Tobacco and Emerging Tobacco and Nicotine Products in the Eastern Mediterranean Region;
8. **REQUESTS** the Regional Director to:
 - 8.1 Provide technical support to countries to support and expedite progress towards their commitments under *Vision 2023* and ensure that they are effectively implemented and monitored;
 - 8.2 Strengthen, empower and capacitate WHO country offices and ensure sufficient and appropriate backstopping from other levels of the Organization to support countries in addressing needs and priorities identified in country support strategies and plans;
 - 8.3 Strengthen regional and country-level partnerships to support the regional health agenda;
 - 8.4 Provide regular updates on progress and achievements to Member States on the implementation of *Vision 2023*, including but not limited to a report to the Regional Committee at its 69th and a final report at its 70th session; and
 - 8.6 Support the work of the High-level Ministerial Group on the Control of Tobacco and Emerging Tobacco and Nicotine Products in the Eastern Mediterranean Region.

Annex: High-level Ministerial Group on the Control of Tobacco and Emerging Tobacco and Nicotine Products in the Eastern Mediterranean Region

Duration

The initial term of the Group will be two years, to be renewed for another two years until 2025, at which point countries are set to report on the voluntary global targets under the Global NCD Action Plan. Renewal after the first two years will be based on a request to the Regional Committee by the Regional Director.

The duration of the Group may be further extended to 2030, to coincide with the planned end of the Global Action Plan on NCDs and the Sustainable Development Agenda.

Terms of reference

The terms of reference of the Group are to:

1. Galvanize high-level strategic leadership and action at both regional and national levels.
2. Foster and initiate high-level policy dialogue to stimulate commitment to, and advocate for, the control of tobacco and emerging products at regional and national level, as specified in the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC) and the MPOWER measures.
3. Advocate for a whole-of-government approach towards better control of tobacco and emerging products at national level.
4. Identify strategic action to counter tobacco industry interference to undermine policies to control tobacco and novel and emerging products, and advocate for its implementation.
5. Communicate key information to Member States in the Region, based on needs and priorities, to accelerate actions in the area of tobacco and nicotine control.

Membership

The Group will comprise six Member States, one of which will be the Chair.

Member States are invited to share with the Regional Director their interest in becoming a Member of the Group by the end of November 2021 at the latest. The first six requests received will be prioritized in the selection process. Other requests will be granted Observer status in the Group.

Once established, the Group can invite other stakeholders, including experts, the WHO FCTC Secretariat and colleagues from all levels of WHO to attend its meetings as technical experts.

Process and Secretariat

The Tobacco Free Initiative, located within Department of UHC/Noncommunicable Diseases and Mental Health at the WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean, will be the main Secretariat for the Group under the guidance of the Director of UHC/Noncommunicable Diseases and Mental Health, the Director of Programme Management and the Regional Director.

The High-Level Ministerial Group will receive quarterly updates from the Secretariat and will meet twice a year, with one annual meeting coinciding with the annual session of the Regional Committee and the other being scheduled based on need. Meetings will be held based on invitations from the Regional Director.

The Secretariat will provide the Group with updates as needed, taking into consideration the above terms of reference, on recent developments in the area of tobacco and nicotine control, based on which the Group can decide on recommendations to other Member States of the Region.

At the end of each two-year term of the Group, the Secretariat will submit a technical report on progress and developments in the area of tobacco and nicotine control to inform further recommendations by the Group to all Member States of the Region, to be presented at the Regional Committee session coinciding with the end of the term.